The maternal gift: extended mothering in the provision of daughters' access to higher education

Abstract

This paper explores the basis of a qualitative, gendered PhD study involving mother and adult daughter pairings in southern England. Middle class mothers are providing exceptional advantage for their daughters beyond the compulsory education sector and into higher education. Findings indicate that this support is often in compensation of mothers' own lack of access to higher education, rather than any shortfall in their daughters' schooling experience. Bourdieusian concepts, including gift exchange, are used to explore the explicit provision of mothers' capital beyond compulsory education that I term 'the maternal gift'. There are clear classed distinctions that are empowering the middle classes to continue extending their gains over those from less advantaged backgrounds. Enhanced mothering is enabling their daughters to access higher education with prolonged support that is consequently creating social division for those less able to provide on such a high economic level. Subsequently the mothers' gift is unwittingly producing socially divisive outcomes.

Keywords: mothering, higher education, Bourdieu, capital.

Introduction

Atkinson (2012) and Perrier (2013) have highlighted how the recent economic climate and subsequent period of austerity has heightened middle class anxiety in trying to preserve class advantage. The changing role of the English higher education into a neoliberal marketplace has fostered students to engage in the central tenet of competitiveness and self-interest, that has subsequently encouraged the inclusion of families, particularly extended maternal support (Author, 2013). This paper examines mothers' involvement beyond the compulsory education sector, to consider how the competition for university places motivates mothers to provide and extend enrichment and extra-curricular activities beyond school, in preparation for university applications and during undergraduate study. Subsequently, middle class mothers can be considered to have taken on the position of status maintainers. Mothers' fears of

downward mobility has been examined by Lareau (2002), Reay (2005) and Bradley (2013) through the discourse of concerted cultivation, the act of topping-up of daughters' opportunities during compulsory education, to support their children's imagined futures.

As discussed by Power (2006), the competitive aspect of maternal involvement in educational choices can be interpreted as a gendered form of placing of blame on women as 'the decision makers' regarding higher education, which has shifted from the institutional domain to personal dilemmas within the home. With a strong feminist methodology at the core of this research (the focus of another paper) it does not place culpability on mothers, or fathers for that matter, supporting their daughters. Through a gendered perspective it seeks to understand the different levels of prospects that emerge for daughters when they are supported by their mothers with disproportionate amounts of capital, which is frequently assessed in classed terms (Ball, 2003). David *et al.* (2003) highlight that mothers' involvement and perspectives in higher education choices is more significant than was previously the case. For the purposes of this research, eighteen mothers took part and all, without exception, demonstrated their desire to provide their daughters both in time and/or money to achieve the possibility of securing a university place. Women explicitly stated their intended outcome was to gain optimum advantage for their daughters to access their choice of higher education (Author, 2013). Rather than exacerbating Power's (2006) findings that women are blamed for their contributions to educational outcomes, I draw on Bourdieu's notion of gift exchange (1977, 2000) and I term mothers' involvement as 'the maternal gift'. The giving of a gift is used in this work as a symbolic gesture of the passing on of educational and social advantage from mother to daughter. In its normal

understanding, the giving a gift on an occasion such as a birthday is usually considered an irreversible process, without consideration to reciprocation (Grenfell and James, 1998). However, Mauss (1990) would argue that there is an expectation of reciprocity in all exchanges. Similarly, Sayer (2005) acknowledges there is an underlying element of conscious behaviour in social action. The use of the maternal gift considers the reasons and motivations for mothers providing such support for their daughters, particularly at a time of women's changing lifecourses from conformist expectations to opportunist futures (Jones, Bradbury and Le Boutillier, 2011).

Literature

The agency of individuals within families remain bound by the rules of the game of education, as the hierarchal nature of the education sector enables mothers to maintain the normative position of the middle classes (Reay, 2012). Bourdieu (1984: 384) acknowledged that the *'education system is one of the fundamental agencies of the social order'*. The possession and mobilisation of social, cultural and economic capital is synonymous with educational reproduction of dominant class structures and identities (Ball, 2003; Brooks, 2004; Dillabough, 2006). Reay (2012) uses further Bourdieusian argument that the working classes who succeed in the education system are totally reliant on it for their success, unlike the middle classes, who can engage their cultural capital to enhance their opportunities.

Maternal support through enrichment activities is an important driver of academic advantage for children during compulsory schooling years (Reay, 1998a, 1998b,

2005). Reay (*ibid.*) brought to our attention the importance of the investment of time in middle class schooling. Research into mothers' continuing engagement in their daughters' educations in the tertiary sector is limited. This paper explores the strategies and tactics employed by middle class mothers in their bid to help secure university places for their daughters. The mothers' subsequent support for their daughters' undergraduate lifestyles I term 'extended mothering'. My research was formed explicitly as a female gendered study to explore social change through women's personal experiences on an intergenerational, mother-daughter basis. Mothers who are able and willing to provide all varieties of support into the tertiary sector do so in a way not socially expected in previous generations, as more women than men now attend university (David *et al*., 2003). The wider aspects of this research consider why mothers continue to be embedded in their daughters' educational decisions beyond childhood. Dyhouse (2002) explains further how the numbers of women in higher education have until recent times been significantly lower than men and this research allows an exploration of women's changing position within the tertiary sector through a gendered, familial dynamic. The practice and positioning of maternal support beyond secondary schooling and into the university years is an indicator of the extended use of power of capital within the middle classes (*ibid.*). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) established the notion of the home as a vital site of social and cultural reproduction. Maternal agency alongside the behaviour embedded through the habitus becomes an important factor in the subsequent potential for the replication of academic advantage or economic hindrance. Extended mothering has the possibility of providing advantage for daughters in the tertiary sector, which suggests the necessity for insight into how such practice is exercised. Maternal support, underpinning academic lifestyle choices and financial backing

during undergraduate study has the ability to create a further class divide (Author, 2013).

The increase in higher education tuition fees is a key factor for mothers' continuing input into their daughters' futures (Author, 2013). The Browne Report (2010) introduced the trebling of tuition fees in 2012 to a maximum of £9,000 per annum, at the same time that the Education Maintenance Allowance was also abolished. The data for this research were collected between 2011 and 2012, at a time of intense interest and speculation over the forthcoming increase in September 2012. The fee rise has provoked mothers to question the 'good start in life' they desire for their daughters and the difficulties of starting life as a young adult with a burgeoning student debt (Author, 2013). Further, the period of austerity has justified more women staying in higher education and delaying entry into the workforce, as a degree offers the greater possibility of enhanced careers earnings and potential in the future (*ibid.*).

This paper does not suggest that fathers who wish to have involvement in their daughters' educations do not have as significant input as mothers. In line with Brooks' (2004: 496) findings, parents 'are likely to assume different roles'. In families where fathers are involved in their daughters' educations, they were predominantly mentioned in relation to monetary support and guidance (Author, 2013). Eleven out of 18 mothers in the sample work and also contribute to their families' financial position, although none of them solely support their daughters. All daughters had differing levels of financial input from fathers, whether absent or present.

Golden and Erdreich (2012) consider mothers' involvement in the education process is a role encompassing work, culture, care and consumption. The practice of enhanced mothering is delaying the daughters' self-sufficiency as adults, as mothers substantiate their engagement in their daughters' futures, based on the cost of funding university education and longer term employment opportunities (*ibid.*). The increasing number of women going into higher education is effecting social change in providing a more highly educated population, with a greater number of women looking to access and remain in careers beyond compulsory education (Author, 2013).

Bourdieu (1977, 2000) uses gift exchange as a metaphor to explore nuanced behaviour, to consider what else could be involved in the action of giving. Gift exchange examines the time lapse after the period of giving, to reveal the truth of practice and underlying or 'other' thought processes involved in the passing on of a gift (Grenfell and James, 1998; James, 2011). The use of gift exchange enables exploration into whether mothers locate themselves as supporting their daughters' education purely from an expected, but extended role of parental responsibility or whether class positioning via extended maternal involvement is evident. Mothers' expectations and reproduction of classed distinctions in the habitus, or unconscious dispositions embodied through family and education can be explored beyond the notion of familial support (Reay, 2004). Gift exchange can be usefully applied to consider the rationale for mothers' extended and extensive involvement in their daughters' choice in the education sector. James (2011) describes gift exchange as an irreversible act of giving that preserves social order and maintains class privilege. There is, however, some sense of reciprocity, as in Mauss' (1990) treatment of 'the gift', as the mothers provide their daughters with the opportunity to go to university

and are ‘rewarded’ by their daughters’ achievements at higher level study. Mothers’ involvement in their daughters’ tertiary education is recreating social difference through enhanced life possibilities. Mothers who are able to provide for their daughters either through economic or cultural capital means, produce class distinctions based on income and knowledge (Reay, 1998b). Grenfell and James (2004) acknowledge that social and cultural capital is symbolic and not tangible, yet has immense power in its relative field. Field can be referred to as a symbolic arena or a field of forces where social interaction is defined and forms of power are held (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Grenfell and James, 2004; Thomson, 2008). Field becomes a site of social and cultural reproduction, where power and control lie between the surface of practice (Bourdieu, 1990; Grenfell and James, 1998). Therefore mothers’ capital through the maternal gift is symbolic, but extremely dominant and powerful in particular fields of education.

Agency and structure are implicit in understanding gift exchange within a gendered perspective of family and class-based discourse. Agency is necessary in the need to adapt in an ever-changing world, as individual action is shaped by structures within society that are ultimately implemented by human action (Giddens, 1990, 2009; Roberts, 2012). For women who have historically been placed in a weaker position to men, having voice as actors is a major shift in female engagement with social and political action (Walby, 1997). The rise of feminist methodology and interpretivism within research has also enabled women’s stories to be heard, based on the lived experience and the importance of the individual voice (Ribbens, 1998; Adkins and Skeggs, 2004). The work of feminism and its position in empowering social gain for women has been critiqued for this research, but is the focus of another paper. Sayer

(2005) argues that agency promotes the relationship between social preference and class commitment. Mothers' behaviour based on their habitus and class preference interplays with field, as individuals bring about change through agency within a given field and promoting classed practices (Grenfell and James, 1998). Bourdieu (1993, 2005) referred to social spaces as field, the social interaction within the field as a game and the individual as players who play the game (Thomson, 2008). O'Donoghue (2013: 201) explains habitus further as 'the feel for the game' and the field 'as the game itself'. The action of individual actors means that field does not remain static and no field exists in isolation (Hodkinson, 1998). As an example, the increase in tuition fees is an institution requirement placed on every student, but such a financial structure was implemented by the actions of individuals. Structures are therefore the outcomes of human actions and agency (Roberts, 2012).

The relationship between habitus and field can be used to usefully understand positions, dispositions, practices and relations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Hodkinson, 1998). Reay (2005) explores how middle class mothers are advantaging school children through extensive application of cultural capital, but in the process are simultaneously creating deeper class divides by acting against the interests of less privileged mothers. Mothers extended support as actors in their daughters' educational choices is achieved in the ways in which they exercise their agency to achieve personal satisfaction and a particular end result (Scott, 2012). The mothers' mobilisation and application of economic capital is creating further class barriers and structures (Reay, 1998a, 1998b, 2005).

This research has identified the significant impact of widening participation on the mothers' generation of women. Women's increased mobility in an exceptional period of social change has afforded women the ability to access education (Dyhouse, 2002; Burke, 2012). This episode in time has been particularly important for women with children, for whom accessible post-1992 institutions afforded higher education possibilities (Burke, 2012). The ability to remain local to home and maintain family responsibilities alongside educational success is a key factor for the success of widening participation among mature, women students. Brine and Waller (2004) argue that women's access to higher education and increased education challenged their personal and classed identities. Greater numbers of women as mature students can break the unconscious pre-conception or doxic position of reproduction of educational pathways (Bourdieu, 1990; James, 1995; Brine and Waller, 2004). Subsequently, transformation of class and educational ideals has in many cases been uplifted for future generations of women (Author, 2013). The role of widening participation has had significant repercussions on the mothers' lifestyles and subsequently that of habitus in which they have raised their daughters.

Methods

In order to explore reproduction or transformation within the dyads, data were collected through in-depth interviews with mothers and their adult daughters, 18 mothers and 21 daughters (three families with two daughters in each). The primary aim of gathering this information was to understand any differences in women's educational and social opportunities between two generations of women. The transformation through education has consequences on life chances and social

mobility (Brown *et al*., 2013). Ten of the mothers are postgraduates or current mature undergraduates. All of the daughters except two have been or are currently studying at university. The focus of the research was maternal involvement in higher education *decisions*, not necessarily whether higher education was an outcome.

Information regarding personal wealth, salary or income was not requested, as I was keen to understand what was important to the support the mothers provided without explicit bias of assumptions based on income. The participants self-identified their class so that no interpretations were made based on responses to other lines of inquiry. Alongside marriage or long-term partnerships, the uptake of higher education through mature studentship has enhanced the mothers' income and lifestyles to a position where some now identify as middle class. The participants were classified through their educational opportunities and backgrounds. In-depth interviews with open-ended questioning were undertaken to discuss areas of compulsory and higher education, class, family and feminism. Interview data were analysed using manual coding, to be able to explore the nuances and responses in depth (Coolican, 1999). Attrition was low; only one mother-daughter couple agreed to take part and subsequently declined, as the daughter took an impromptu gap year to go travelling.

Various methods were employed to attract mothers and daughters to participate in this research. Sixth form cohorts in secondary schools were approached, but school office gatekeeping prohibited access to the relevant parties. Two women's network groups were contacted, but declined to take part. Most successfully, participants were gathered from the south of England using a snowball strategy, whereby one mother-daughter dyad was approached and they introduced a further couple; this process

continued until 39 women were involved. The sample is not an example of one friendship chain; the pairs of women became more socially and ethnically diverse as the research became geographically spread across the south of England and the numbers increased. However, recurring patterns began to emerge to reveal an overall representation (Bertaux, 1981). It is acknowledged that participants who introduced other friends or colleagues did exhibit a replication of their own social norms and values, meaning that this sample has unintentionally become predominantly middle-classed. The maintenance of class order is kept as people associate within their own socially constructed network (Ball, 2003).

As discussed previously, the importance of this work is not only to highlight classed practices, but like Davey's (2012) work, to hear personal narratives of many voices. There was a deliberate intention not to narrow the data set by only allowing participants of a certain age, educational background or class. The use of the mother-daughter relationship has meant that the participants were able to comment on explicit instances of their lived experience, bound by constantly changing familial and social contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The subsequent sample that was produced therefore fulfilled my criteria of mother and adult daughter couples, without being constrained by specific socio-cultural groupings. This is small-scale, exploratory research and my opportunistic approach to finding participants is therefore not generalisable, but the responses of each participant are both important to them personally and attend to the focus of this study. This reveals an understanding of internal validity for each individual, which is identified as an important component of working within the interpretative paradigm (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). For clarity, three pairings are used for discussion in this paper, shown at Table 1. Across

the whole data set there is variation in age, educational and familial background, class and ethnicity.

Table 1

MOTHER*	DAUGHTER*
HELEN: 45-years-old. State educated to A-levels. Clerical worker until she had her children. Full-time mother since the birth of Helena. Middle class**	**Helena**: 19-year-old, first year art undergraduate. Privately educated to A-levels. Middle class.
JENNY: 55-year-old voluntary worker and charity fundraiser. State educated to A-levels. Middle class.	**Jennifer**: PR manager, 24 years old. Privately educated to A-levels. BA graduate in Business Management and Psychology. Middle class.
JESS: Science technician in a secondary school. State educated to O-levels. 50 years old. Working/middle class.	**Jessica**: Current third year undergraduate in Psychology after taking a gap year. State educated to A-levels. 21 years old. Lower/middle class.
TARA: 53-year-old unwaged part-time Masters student. State educated to O-levels. Has always worked and trained in the early years sector and is currently pursuing higher education. Working class.	**Taruh**: 23-years-old. Educated in the Middle East until 14, then state educated in England to A-levels. BA graduate in International Relations and now working for a Non-Governmental Organisation. Not willing to identify class.

* All participants' names in this paper are pseudonyms.
** Participants' self-identification of their class status.

Discussion of the findings

During early thematic analysis it became clear that mothers' involvement was central to schooling and university. All of the daughters, without exception, spoke of following-on from compulsory education to university as an expectation or assumption. Their social construction of education as a norm into adulthood differed from the predominant experiences of the mothers. For many of the mothers, they had a different set of social expectations to their daughters; the most common pathway for the mothers at age 16 or 18 was going into the workplace and not continuing into higher education. There has been a switch in educational norms as university transition straight from A-levels has become the conventional pattern and students who do not continue on to university are seen as unusual (Author, 2013). The mothers

illustrated how in many cases, they were compensating for their own lack of opportunity in their youth, whilst the daughters' narratives concomitantly show a transformation of educational outcome between the dyads. Like the women in Archer and Leathwood's (2003: 188) study, Helena articulates her mother's 'hidden and wasted potential', a pattern demonstrated by the mothers of wanting their daughters to 'escape from their working class lives'.

> *'Maybe one or two people out of my original class who did their O-levels would have gone off to university. Most people wouldn't. I mean, not their mentality, but their norm was to get married and have kids and that was it'. [Helen, mother]*

> *'I mean obviously she wanted the best for us because she could give us that […] I knew she wanted me to go. Part of the reason is that she wants the best for us and part of the reason is, hold on, I didn't go to university, but you can'. [Helena, daughter]*

James' (2007) study was important in finding that mothers were more likely to be drivers of their daughters' education if they were not supported to go to university themselves. As a mature student herself, Tara (mother) was the only mother in the sample not able to financially support Taruh through her university years, but is an influential figure in her daughter's study experiences:

> *'Pushy mother, pushy mother. Laying the seeds. I didn't have any pushing growing up'. [Tara, mother]*

> *'Mum's always said to us you're going to university, it's not an option […] I didn't do very well and Mum was like no, you're just going to work harder next year and then you will go to university […] there was never an option not to go to university'. [Taruh, daughter]*

The drive from both mother and daughter reflects the trend in this study that university was the main option post-school for the daughters. Thomson *et al.'s* (2011: 118 and 119) study of modern motherhood also uncovers 'intergenerational recouperation', where daughters realise 'thwarted ambitions for education or career, or repairing the isolation or hardship that their mothers endured'.

The mothers provided extensive support for their daughters using all forms of capital, predominantly the application of economic, cultural and social capital. All directly cited the notion of wanting to give their daughters 'the best start in life' or suggested they were compensating for their own lack of educational opportunity at the same age. For Tara, she is now educating herself to Masters level to improve her own career progression. The premise of how the mothers provided this 'best start' and pass on the maternal gift is investigated using the idea of how they play the education game.

Playing the education game

The mothers in this study are employing many tactics and a conscious mobilisation of capital to enhance their daughters' opportunities and in doing so are playing the education game (Author, 2013). The mothers are powerfully demonstrating Ball's (2003) theory of how the match of the habitus to the field promotes positive academic

outcomes. Playing the game examines how the acquisition and use of capital enables and extends social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu often used analogies to explain his terms, such as a social field being as a football pitch, with social agents or players within a boundary (Thomson, 2008). In *Sociology in Question*, Bourdieu (1993) uses the example of a game of roulette to discuss how social actors with ownership of cultural capital informs the investment of their economic capital in game playing within the field of education. The extensive making-up of educational opportunities through the application of capital is a common illustration of how to play the game. James (2011) outlines how personal motivations and ambitions inform game playing, to provide a certainty of academic trajectory, whilst concurrently maintaining privilege and social order.

The mothers talked more generally about the shift in the job market, that going into work and earning money was commonplace and university was not the focus for school leavers at that time:

> *'All my friends left and we all just went and got jobs. Jobs were plentiful then, so you just applied for jobs and everybody, well most of my generation went out to work at 16'. [Jess, mother]*

> *'I've known since, well ever since I can remember that I wanted to go to uni and I suppose they just locked in on that, remembered it and supported me […] I enjoyed learning really and I'll always learn, even when I finish uni'. [Jessica, daughter]*

'I did A-levels but didn't do very well at them because I couldn't be bothered to work […] I started work because I didn't want to stay in education […] I wanted to go out and start earning money'. [Helen, mother]

'When we were at school we basically just thought going to university was the thing to do. There was a lot of stuff about UCAS deadlines and career support at school, so I just got my form in'. [Helena, daughter]

The retranslation of educational opportunity is embedded in both sets of these narratives. From early childhood, the fragmented ways in which education is accessed in England enables inequalities to be exacerbated and opportunities lost (Ball, 2012). The fields of education remain socially divided by state comprehensives, grammar and independent schools, with sub-fields within the tertiary level. In considering extended maternal practice into the tertiary sector, mothers are capitalising on their game-playing to provide a strong UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) statement. Educational qualifications are the main requirements for entry into middle class professions (Devine, 2004). Mothers' provision of opportunities is enabling daughters to demonstrate skills and work experience over and beyond the norm, in order to access the universities of their choice (Author, 2013). The provision of private education, greater opportunities and enrichment activities are a demonstration of how UCAS applications can be enhanced. The personal statement is a powerful way in which applications can be enhanced beyond academic input (Jones, 2012). In terms of qualifications, the International Baccalaureate (IB) carries more UCAS points than the more widely accessed GCE A-level (UCAS, 2013). The IB is more commonly accessed by the private sector showing a nuanced, but clear indicator

of schools' status within the application. Wider narratives in the research included discussions of the provision of extensive travel, including fully funded work opportunities abroad and voluntary work experience found by parental contacts. These examples are in contrast to Taruh's experiences, who explains the pressure of finding voluntary work, something she felt was a necessity to put on her UCAS form in order to differentiate her application from others:

> *'In my sector, in Development, like you really need to be overqualified a lot of the time because they just want absolute experts in the field and they want you to work for no money […] I can't afford not to work. If I don't go to work, I don't have an income' [Taruh, daughter]*

Sayer (2005: 14) argues that jobs with different pay reproduces class, therefore job opportunities are unequal: '*children will still inherit their new class advantages or disadvantages, with lasting objective effects that would strongly influence their fitness for particular jobs'*. Using Sayer's example, Taruh's experiences of being asked to work for free creates an immediate class inequality in relation to her co-workers who will be doing the same job, yet for a wage. Taruh explains the necessity for an income.

Jenny and Helen have provided independent education provision that has had benefits for their daughters beyond the private school classroom. Helen tells of her rationale for choosing a fee-paying school and Helena spoke of capitalising on the opportunities:

> *'I think at the moment in the education system money talks. So she's going off and having an education […] she's fortunate that when she comes out of uni*

she's not going to have any debt whatsoever […] she has had her fees paid for her, she has her accommodation paid for her, she has an allowance every week […] It's her choice if she gets a job at uni, but she doesn't need to'. [Helen, mother]

'They give me money each week […] Mum stocked up my cupboard and freezer with food at the start of the term […] I know I'm lucky to have a car and a phone and things which they pay for'. [Helena, daughter]

Helen's wider narrative indicates financial difficulty during her childhood and social or educational transformation in adulthood. Jess works solely to support her two eldest children through university. The pressure of parents paying their children's tuition fees is an increasing burden on families' wealth (Bradley and Ingram, 2012):

"I took on extra hours at work to help them out because obviously we are paying both their rents, so I took that on […] as I say if she did go (on to do a Masters course) we would help her out again. I think she's actually 'uming' and 'ahing' but I would encourage her to do it, but then I sound like a pushy parent'. [Jess, mother]

Taruh's mother, Tara, was unable to provide financially for her daughter, but used her cultural capital through work contacts to provide Taruh with waitressing experience and ultimately provide some income. Several of the mothers also spoke of practicalities, such as stocking cupboards with food during term time. Her support, governed by her knowledge through cultural capital, rather than the benefits of

economic support, is a further example of extended mothering. The discussion around financial sacrifices beyond the schooling years was also indicative of the rising tuition fees, including Jess' example of working purely to pay for her daughters' accommodation costs. Noddings (2003) discusses how mothers often make choices for their children to the detriment of the choices they would otherwise make.

Extended mothering through the appropriation of capital, whether economic or cultural, is seen as the impetus for providing daughters with the necessary tools to provide additional levels of activities to ultimately construct a strong UCAS statement or curriculum vitae (CV) for employment. Gathering qualifications and job experience are articulated as vital for inclusion on CVs. For these mothers, their support in creating a strong statement implies beating, rather than cheating the education system (Author, 2013). Bathmaker *et al*. (2013) further suggest the importance of the place of social class in mobilising capital for gain in the higher education system.

In considering the passing on of the maternal gift, it was necessary to uncover whether any of the mothers were showing signs of illusio (Bourdieu, 1977, 1998). Bourdieu (1998: 76) describes illusio thus:

> *'the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing […] that playing is worth the effort […] to participate, to admit that the game is worth playing and the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing'.*

Illusio can also be described as a truth believed by those who have an investment in the game, often assumed by those involved, but not by others (Webb, Shirato and Danaher, 2002). For the mothers playing the game for their daughters, they are bound by two main factors: an emotional attachment to their children and their belief in the value of educational outcome, whilst concurrently giving the appearance of disinterestedness. This conceals the reality that there is a motivation for involvement (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; James, 2012). Illusio demonstrates how the mothers' aspirations are borne out of their playing the game, to transform their daughters' education whilst enabling social reproduction within the family (Bourdieu, 1993).

To explore illusio between the dyads, Jennifer's narrative discussed her understanding of the necessity of work experience as a catalyst for gaining employment:

> *'We [family] knew someone who had a contact in a PR agency and I emailed them and they gave me two months' work experience. So when I came out of uni […] it was actually PR that I got into and I think mainly because I had that work experience on my CV, which is basically what you need to get into the workforce'. [Jennifer, daughter]*

Jenny (mother) provided a rationale for supporting her daughter through university and in the process illustrates her sense of illusio:

'She's worked hard. She got a First. Y'know, she's gone out there, she's found work, she's living away and completely independent […] I feel she appreciates we've given her a really good start in life'. [Jenny, mother]

Jenny's narrative illustrates that she believes that the pursuance of her daughter's degree has been the gateway to her independent, adult life. Jenny suggests that any sacrifices made to support Jennifer through university have been justified, under the guise of the ultimate outcome of employment and stability in adulthood. Jenny does not give any consideration to the fact that her daughter's career pathway could have been similar without her degree, given Jennifer's argument that work experience was central to her finding employment, and not her graduate status. Devine (2004) suggests social and cultural capital is key to influencing outcomes and expectations, both academically and professionally. Jenny's aspirations for her daughter are borne out of her playing the game to transform Jennifer's education from her own and subsequently enabling social reproduction within the family. Jennifer states explicitly that her family's social and cultural capital were implicit to her accessing her work placement and finding subsequent full-time employment. Daughters with the benefit of capital within their families have very powerful advocacy for their university applications.

Conclusion

The passing on of the maternal gift is a highly subjective process. Extended mothering explores how mothers are supporting their daughters through compulsory education, into university and in some cases, beyond. Mothers view their involvement in their

daughters' undergraduate entry as normative, maternal behaviour. Far from acting only in a position of being a positive support mechanism, these women are playing the education game. Reay (1998a, 1998b) introduced the concept of mothers complementing, compensating and modifying the education process in the primary sector. This research highlights that mothers are continuing this process into the tertiary sector and have become instrumental in co-constructing their daughters' experiences. Predominantly, mothers are arguing their involvement is to gain the 'best start in life' for their daughters, but in doing so are maintaining and extending their economic privilege and using their cultural capital to its best advantage.

Mothers' involvement in gaining advantage for their daughters in accessing a university place and maintaining an undergraduate lifestyle has the potential to have a significant impact in the tertiary sector. The introduction of higher education tuition fees has been a further catalyst for maternal involvement, as mothers cite the burden of the debt as a key factor for their continued inclusion in the education process into adulthood (Author, 2013). This extended mothering practice is promoting a transformation in familial outcomes and challenges the historical norm of fathers' class background as necessary for women to aspire to careers and lifestyles beyond a domestic role.

Using Bourdieu's gift exchange (1977, 2000) as a starting point, the symbolism of the maternal gift has been used to explore mothers' involvement and provision of the gift of education. All of the mothers in this sample are knowingly trying to increase their daughters' educational advantage by playing the education game and passing on the maternal gift. To the contrary of any sense of daughters having complete autonomy

over their decisions surrounding university choice, all of the mothers are assertively engaging in material, financial and knowledge-based support. There is no hidden agenda in their narratives, instead an explicit and open belief that their behaviour is normative mothering support and practice in a competitive educational marketplace. Bourdieusian theory is reliant on an understanding of the reflexivity between agency and structure to explore how individuals behave as social actors (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Mothers' increasing role in their daughters' higher education is delaying the point at which the daughters are reaching full independence, as they bring about social change by their actions within the structure of the tertiary education sector.

Many mothers argue that their actions are in response to the opposition to their own backgrounds and they are instinctually providing for their daughters in a way from which they did not benefit. I have used Bourdieu's analogy of playing the game, to show how mothers' involvement enables greater opportunity and gain for their daughters. At tertiary level, their support begins with opportunities for their daughters to build strong UCAS statements. The provision of private education and extra tutelage are clear strategies for gaining the best qualifications. Alongside the making-up of the academic prospects, mothers provide openings and opportunities for their daughters to travel, gain work experience and other curricula activities such as music or sport to enhance their applications.

An exploration into illusio has, in many cases, uncovered a sense of 'looking away' rather than complete misrecognition of the consequences of their actions. Motherhood compels those women who have time, money and knowledge to take extensive

measures of support. Once a university place has been gained, on-going provision has been outlined in several ways. Extreme examples of the use of economic capital include the purchasing of cars, mobile telephones and full repayment of tuition fees. More nuanced appropriation of capital includes cultural opportunities and the use of social networks. This behaviour is becoming increasingly normative, as high tuition fees and living costs provoke mothers to extend this level of lifestyle. In so doing, daughters from working-class families cannot compete with such advantage and necessitate the undertaking of employment during the study period.

The findings from this small-scale study cannot be generalised. However, it is likely that whilst schools and access to compulsory education is fragmented by cost, catchment area and academic league table results, mothers will continue to exploit the channels within the system that is a deficit model for working class families. Extended mothering is a socially constructed practice that has the potential to alter university access for future generations of students. Although this research highlights gendered reproduction or transformation for women, it is evident that these mothers' actions are class based, supported by available capital. Enrichment activities enhance academic opportunities onward from compulsory schooling years and as I have shown here, mothers do not stop this exceptional provision until the game has been won into the tertiary sector. Mothers will continue passing on the maternal gift through extended mothering practices whilst the education system remains an unequal playing field.

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